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Personal experience under
Burnside and Hooker

1862 and 1863.

By Henry Seymour Hall.



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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
UNDER
GENERALS
BURNSIDE AND HOOKER,
IN THE BATTLES OF
FREDERICKSBURG AND CHANCELLORSVILLE,

December 11, 12, 13 and 14, 1862,
— AND —

May 1, 2, 3 and 4, 1863.

A PAPER
PREPARED AND READ BEFORE THE
KANSAS COMMANDERY
OF THE
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States.

BY COMPANION
H. SEYMOUR HALL,
Brigadier General U. S. Vols., by brevet.

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Personal Experience Under Generals Burnside and Hooker in
the Battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville,
December 11, 12, 13, and 14, 1862 and May 1, 2, 3 and 4, 1863.

General A. E. Burnside's order assuming command of the army November 9th, was followed by a few days of inaction, so it was the 16th, when we moved from New Baltimore easterly through Greenwich to Catlett's, crossing Cedar run below the brick mill, resuming our march the next day in the direction of Fredericksburg, Gen. W. F. Smith, "Baldy," in command of the corps. Rain set in, the weather was cold, and as we camped on the old Alexandria and Richmond telegraph road, toward Stafford court house, the night of the 18th, it seemed as if the campaign must summarily end, by reason of the storm and mud that had so often caused us disappointment. At this time a correspondence was in progress concerning myself, of which I had no knowledge, till General Slocum told me of it long afterwards, then I secured the letters from the office of the Adjutant General of the state of New York.

The originals in my posession read thus: "Headquarters 12th Corps, Harper's Ferry, Va., Nov. 17th, 1862. General:- The 145th N. Y. Vols., is without a Colonel, W. H. Allen having no commission was directed to leave the Post. The Regiment needs a good officer at its head. If the Governor has no experienced officer in view for this position, I would respectfully recommend the appointment of Captain H. Seymour Hall, of the 27th. N. Y. Vols. I am well acquainted with him, and know him to be a capable and efficient officer, and think his appointment would be a great benefit to the service. Captain Hall has no knowledge of my intention to recommend him for this position, and in doing it I am only actuated by a desire

to improve the condition of the troops under my command. I am Sir, Very Respectfully, Your Obt Svt, H. W. Slocum, Maj. Gen. Vols. Comdg.; Gen. Thos. Hillhouse, Adjt. Gen. Albany, N. Y."

Accompanying the foregoing was a letter from General N. J. Jackson, previously Colonel of the 5th. Regiment Maine Volunteers, which reads, "Headquarters 2nd. Brigade, 2nd. Division, 12th. Corps, November 17th., 1862. General:—I have the honor to request that Captain H. Seymour Hall of G. Company, 27th. N. Y. Vols., be appointed Colonel of the 145th. Regt. N. Y. Vols., which Regiment is now in the Brigade under my command and has no Colonel. The 145th. Regiment is composed of good material, yet in its present state of discipline it needs an energetic and able commander. I have known Captain Hall for the past fifteen months and consider him in every way qualified to fill the above mentioned position. Should this recommendation meet with the approval of his Excellency, Governor Morgan, I should be pleased to have the appointment made as soon as practicable. I am very truly Your obedient servant, N. J. Jackson, Brig. Gen'l. Vols. Comdg. Brigade; Brig. Gen'l. Thomas Hillhouse, Adjt. Gen. State of New York."

The endorsement on this, as is his own letter, is wholly in General Slocum's hand writing. It reads "Headquarters 12th Army Corps, Harpers Ferry, Va., November 20th, 1862. I have been personally acquainted with Captain Hall since the commencement of the war and know him to be a capable, efficient, and faithful officer, and most cordially unite with General Jackson in this recommendation. A Colonel should be appointed for this Regiment as soon as possible. H. W. Slocum, Major General Vols., Comdg. Corps." Why the governor did not make this appointment I do not know. No Colonel was appointed, and General Slocum, transferred the companies to other regiments, thus breaking up the regimental organization. Meantime as we occupied the northern bank of the Rap-

pahannock, the enemy were in force on the opposite bank, the relations between the men on the picket line, were quite friendly, rumors of exchange of coffee for tobacco, and one night of some Alabamans, whom we had encountered at first Bull Run under Gen. Bee, crossing and drinking coffee, were heard.

Some of the boys afterward confirmed this rumor, and I had reason to believe that some of the Lima students assisted in entertaining those bright young men from Alabama, at the midnight coffee drinking, and afterwards escorted them to their boat with friendly courtesy. The weather and the condition of the roads precluded the possibility of moving against the enemy, the supplying of rations from our new base, Belle Plain, on Acquia creek, was a very difficult matter. We had no orders to prepare for winter quarters, but log walls for our tents were built, and on the first of December, I received an order from General Franklin, now commanding the Left Grand Division of the three into which the army was organized, to proceed to Washington, and procure the property belonging to the command, which had been stored there since our return from the Peninsula. On my return we moved the 4th. to Belle Plain, a storm of rain, snow, and intense cold, coming upon us on the way, and arriving after dark, we were exposed to its fury, without adequate shelter, the whole night. We at once assumed the guard and fatigue duty at the landing, but the weather being very cold, the exposure and suffering very great, the order to return to our position opposite Fredericksburg on the 10th., was welcome, though it did promise us a closer acquaintance with the enemy, who had been allowed ample time to fortify the position, naturally very strong, against which we were to advance. The prelude was already begun when we arrived on the scene. Fredericksburg and the batteries on the heights in rear were being furiously bombarded by our heavy artillery, fire and flame were raging in the city, and when the thunder of our batteries was answered by the enemy, the screaming, shriek-

ing projectiles from his heavy Whitworth guns found their way into our bivouac, and disturbed our rest. Early on the morning of the 11th., our brigade, commanded by Colonel H. L. Cake, 96th. Pennsylvania Vols., took position near where pontoon bridges were to be thrown across the Rappahannock river, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles below the city, in readiness to cross, which we did at nightfall, deployed skirmishers, advanced on the left half a mile without seeing the enemy, when we were recalled, left pickets on the right bank, recrossed, and bivouacked for the night. All day and throughout the following night, the earth shook with the thunder of the heavy artillery, the flash and roar of the guns on Stafford heights, were answered by flash and roar from Marye's heights and the adjacent hills, while the fiery trail of the deadly shells in the air, and the devouring flames consuming the doomed city on the plain, lent a terrible sublimity to the scene. Early next morning, Friday, our Left Grand Division was in motion, pressing forward over two pontoon bridges, taking position in line, facing the intrenchments in which the command of General T. J. Jackson, with *him*, "Stonewall", for their commander, awaited our onset. A heavy cloud of fog and battle smoke overhung the plain, and shut out of sight the ruined city. Scarcely were we in place, when Colonel Adams ordered me take two companies, and ascertain who held Fredericksburg. Noiselessly, under cover of the friendly fog, my mission was accomplished. I ascertained that General Sumner had crossed, driven the foe from the streets, and grimly held what he had so audaciously seized. I returned, reported the facts to Colonel Adams, was ordered by him to communicate them to General Brooks. The General thereupon ordered me to take two hundred men and establish a line of pickets communicating with General Sumner's Grand Division, which I did, advancing them to the front within two hundred yards of the enemy's outposts, undiscovered till the fog rolled away.

On the morning of the 13th. Jackson attempted his

favorite tactical movement by a fierce and sudden attack on our left flank, and continued to press us in that part of the field for several hours with the most determined valor, till about four o'clock P. M., when we suddenly took the offensive, drove him back over a mile, and held the ground through the night and the next day, both sides keeping well under cover from the constant fusilade of musketry and artillery. On the right the field of action where Sumner, attempting the impossible task of driving Longstreet from the most strongly fortified and impregnable heights, was in plain sight from our position on the plain. Six times did his gallant men steadily advance to the assault of those now forever historic heights, six times were the brave battalions successively almost destroyed by the tempest of fire and leaden hail, and as fresh ones took their place, their dead found lying in line of battle, their few surviving comrades bleeding, broken but not dismayed. Such discipline and devotion to duty had rarely been seen before, as were that Saturday, December 13, 1862, displayed on the heights behind the little city on the plain. Sunday and Monday were passed in vigilant watchfulness, amid a constant roar of artillery, and rattle of musketry, but as both our men and the enemy kept well under cover, neither attempting to advance from their position, the casualties were not very considerable. At midnight, our occupancy of that plain having continued the 11th., 12th., 13th., 14th., and 15th., we retired across the Rappahannock, unmolested by the enemy. About noon as will be found to be the case after almost every battle, rain fell, and continued unremittingly till all were thoroughly wet and miserable. On the 19th. we went into camp near White Oak Church, where on the 22nd., I was detailed on Court Martial, of which Col. H. L. Cake was president, in session the rest of the year.

No orders were issued to go into winter quarters, but the men had learned by experience to avail themselves of every appearance of a period of respite from campaigning to make their quarters as comfortable as the surroundings

would allow, and the regimental and company officers gave them encouragement and assistance in building timber walls, and clay fire places, beneath their roofing of shelter tents, and while the army was to refit, the men had comfortably housed and sheltered themselves, without the least assurance from army headquarters, that this would be our final camping place for the remainder of the winter. A few days before what is known as "The Mud March," was ordered by General Burnside, this order was delivered to me. "Headquarters 2nd. Brigade, January 15th., 1863. General Orders No. 2. In obedience to General Orders No. 3., Headquarters Left Grand Division, Captain H. S. Hall, 27th. N. Y. Vols., is hereby appointed Inspector of this Brigade, and will be obeyed and respected accordingly. He will report at once for duty at these Headquarters. By order of Brigadier General Bartlett. R. P. Wilson, A. A. A. Gen'l."

The mud march was to begin on Sunday the 18th., but General Franklin made a suggestion that unless everything was fully in readiness, it would be better to leave the troops yet that day in camp, so that it was the 19th. when we struck our tents, and marched up the Rappahannock with the purpose of turning the enemy's left by the upper fords of the river, and surprising him by an attack on his flank and rear. Before nightfall the rain began to fall, and soon the roadway became a stream of thin, almost bottomless mud, but our orders were imperative and we waded on, with all the enthusiasm gone out of us. Night came, and weary and dispirited we sat us down in the rain and darkness to wait for daylight, but not to sleep. In the morning we secured a tent to shelter the General and other officers at brigade headquarters, and we remained where the darkness of the previous night overtook us, near Banks' ford, which was the place designated for the crossing of the main body of the army. We were close to General Burnside's tents, near a ravine which the road leading to the ford crossed, and almost every gun, pontoon wagon, or other wagon, that essayed

the passage stuck in the mud, till the efforts of the teams were aided by the men, till finally the ravine became impassable and the effort was abandoned. From the characteristic language of the drivers, the infantry within hearing unanimously christened the place, "Profanity Gulch". The expectation of surprising the enemy, with which General Burnside had set out, was evidently impossible of realization, so with his designs exposed to the enemy's cavalry, who gleefully observed our situation from their safe location on the opposite bank of the river, and his movement thwarted by the rain and mud, he gave orders on the 23rd. for the army to return to camp. General Brooks' division, being retained to guard the pontoon trains, did not retire till the 24th., when we were drawn up on both sides of the road over which the wagons loaded with boats and bridge material must pass. General Benham had drag ropes attached to wagons that were stuck fast in the mud, from which the teams had been taken when the forward movement was abandoned, and without putting the teams on requested General Brooks to have his troops take the ropes and pull the wagons out. I heard the reply, "Where are your animals? By—Sir, put on your animals, put on your animals first, by—Sir." General Benham put on his animals, the men took the ropes, and we were soon toiling through the mud on our way to the old camp, which we reached about night the 24th. Immediately all set to work to perfect new quarters, my new duties keeping me busy with inspection of the troops, and seeing that reports and returns required of company and regimental officers were made out and forwarded, and that the required books were properly kept, a regulation which had been very little observed, and although not forming a part of the brigade, some horses and other public property of Williston's famous battery received some attention by virtue of this order, "Headquarters 1st. Division, 6th. Corps, February 19th., 1863. General Orders No. 49. Captain H. Seymour Hall, Inspector of the 2nd. Brigade, is detailed to

examine into, and report upon, the condition of certain public horses belonging to battery "D" 2nd. U. S. Artillery. By order of Brigadier General Brooks, A. H. Parsons, A. A. A. General." In providing myself with a saddle horse, required by my new duties on the staff of the brigade commander, a Morgan mare was shown me by Colonel Lewis A. Grant, of the 5th. Regiment Vermont Volunteers; from him I purchased her, rode her in every campaign of the army of the Potomac till the end of the war, and on the Rio Grande, in Texas, under General Sheridan. The name and rank of the gentleman who sold me this, my favorite animal, will identify him as the General Grant, who was assistant Secretary of War, from 1888 to December, 1893. Another piece of good fortune happened to me in the detail on the staff of General Bartlett, of Captain W. W. Winthrop as additional Aid-de-Camp, and his taking quarters in the tent with me, so that during the winter I had the pleasure of being thus intimately associated with him. The gallant and accomplished Theodore Winthrop, the author of John Brent, &c. who was on the staff of General Butler, and was killed at Big Bethel, was his brother. Just at the close of winter, Captain Winthrop was ordered to report for duty in the office of Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt, War Department, Washington, and is now Judge Advocate U. S. Army, Colonel, and instructor in international law at the Military Academy at West Point.

This paper is not intended to embrace general history, but it is well to state here that on the 23rd. of January, General Burnside drew up an order dismissing from the service Generals Hooker, Brooks, and Newton, and relieving from duty Generals Franklin, Smith, Sturgis, Ferriero, and Cochrane; went to Washington, submitted it to President Lincoln, by whom it was not approved, hence it was never issued, but on the 25th., the President directed that General Burnside be relieved from command of the Army of the Potomac, at his own request, and General Joseph Hooker assigned to the command. The

work of equipment drill and discipline went on till the army seemed to be almost perfect in all its appointments. While Burnside was still in command, "Little Copeland," (now Rev. J. A.,) whom I have before mentioned, was correspondent for a Rochester, N. Y. news paper. He sent an account of Fredericksburg, and some meddler furnished to General Burnside a copy of the paper in which it appeared, and the information of whom the writer was, and where he could be found. He was put in confinement under the Provost Marshal's guard at army headquarters, and charges preferred against him of "Indirectly giving information to the enemy". A Court was ordered for his trial, of which General Daniel E. Sickels was president, and having determined what course I would take to secure his release, I went early on the day of the trial, and when the case came up, made the suggestion that the court had no jurisdiction, and that the defendant should be tried in his own division, a view which the court adopted, and remanded him to General Brooks for trial. Meantime I had acquainted General Brooks with the case, and furnished him with a copy of the article, so when Copeland was turned over to him he showed the boy the paper and asked in his most brusque manner and gruff tone "Did you write that?" "Yes sir, was the answer." "You are a——fool for owning it. Go to your company and report for duty," That was the last of the matter.

The end of March was approaching, and General Bartlett's appointment had not been confirmed by the senate. On the 29th. he notified me to order my horse and accompany him to Army Headquarters, where myself with other members of his staff were shown into General Hooker's tent with him. The commander of the army was in fine spirits, and after wine and cigars were tendered us, he engaged in conversation with our chief, we listened. Of course more was said that led up to the General's remarks, "I have the finest army the sun ever shone on. I can march this army to New Orleans. My

plans are perfect, and when I start to carry them out, may God have mercy on General Lee, for I will have none." The words made an impression on me I have never forgotten, and often have been in my mind. After a while General Bartlett made known his errand. "General I have come to bid you good-bye, and to bespeak your favor for these young gentlemen who compose my military family. The Senate has not confirmed my appointment, and my commission has expired by limitation." The tall, fine looking soldier, one of the finest looking in the army, had a skin as clear, and a hand as small as many a lady, and his clear blue eyes looked fully and frankly into the face of his subordinate as he said, "When you return to your quarters take off your uniform, keep quiet till you hear from me. Tomorrow I will go to Washington, and see the President." The next day was Monday, and on Tuesday General Butterfield, dispatched to General Bartlett, "Put on your uniform." He was reappointed.

The grand division organization was discontinued and General John Sedgwick relieved General W. F. Smith in command of the sixth corps, on the 4th. of February, and General in Chief Halleck, seemed to be in shadow, as General Hooker reported direct to the president, and notwithstanding his alleged readiness to annihilate General Lee, he was in no haste to set out. On the 18th. of April, while still in our winter camps, I was ordered by General Brooks to serve as Judge Advocate of a General Court Martial of which General J. J. Bartlett was president, and soon after the close of our term, the campaign opened with us, by a move down to the river under cover of the darkness near the place where we had crossed the December previous, and at 4 o'clock A. M., April 29th., with permission of General Bartlett, I dismounted and went over in the boats with the first detachment, which drove the 21st. Mississippi from their rifle pits on the bank of the river, with a loss of two killed and eleven wounded, then advanced a mile, and took position to protect the

engineers while building their bridges, and dug rifle pits during the night, and the following night I spent with Colonel Emory Upton on the picket line, listening and watching for the enemy's movements. At the outset there were three corps with General Sedgwick, two were withdrawn before any general movement was made, leaving him with only his own, the sixth, to cope with the command of General Jackson in his front, and on his left toward Port Royal.

Leaving General Early's division, Barksdale's brigade of McLaw's division, and General Pendleton with part of the Reserve Artillery to confront us below the city, and General Wilcox's division with the Washington Artillery to hold the heights above, General Jackson moved with the rest of his command on the morning of the first of May, to join General Lee at Chancellorsville, a movement which culminated in his famous flank movement around General Hooker's right. Our line was maintained from Deep run on the right, to the ruins of the Bernard house on the left, the centre advanced to include part of the Richmond road within the extremities of our line, and this situation was maintained without material change till the afternoon of May 2nd., when after a sharp engagement, we gained considerable ground on our right. Up to this time General Sedgwick's orders from General Hooker had been quite varied. The 29th. only Brooks' division was to cross; the 30th. two bridges were to be taken up and sent to Banks' ford; May 1st. he was ordered to make a demonstration in force at 1 P. M., and to let it be as severe as possible without being an attack, to assume a threatening attitude, and maintain it till further orders. That order was not received till 5 P. M., hence could not be obeyed as to the time, but owing to the last clause, movements were at once begun to execute the order, and just as they were completed, orders were received countering the demonstration. May 2nd., he was ordered to take up all the bridges at Franklin's crossing, and below, before daylight. That order was

not received till 5.25 A. M., after daylight. At 6.30 P. M., he was ordered to pursue the enemy by the Bowling Green road, and the corps was at once put in motion, and after a hard fight pushed the enemy from the road back into the woods. That night, at 11 o'clock, he received an order dated 10.10 P. M., directing him to cross the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg, immediately upon receipt of the order, and move in the direction of Chancellorsville until he connected with the major-general commanding; to attack and destroy any force on the road, and be in the vicinity of the general at daylight. A moment's consideration will show the utter impossibility of obeying that order literally. Sedgwick's entire force was on the south side of the Rappahannock, "to pursue by the Bowling Green road." There were no bridges laid at Fredericksburg, and to recross, move up opposite that place, lay bridges, for the purpose of getting back to the side he was on when the order reached him, would have taken till long after daylight, even if there had been no enemy to resist his crossing. He at once put the second and third divisions in motion toward the city, before which the enemy retired slowly, stubbornly contesting every inch of ground from almost our bridge head, and at the same time made a sudden attack on our pickets in front of the Bernard house, showing that it would by no means be an easy task "to destroy any force on the road," but pushing the enemy back through the town before daylight, the enemy's stronghold on the heights in the rear, was at once assailed by Wheaton and Shaler, who were repulsed by the fire of the rifle pits and the batteries on the heights in their rear, while their line on front of and to the left of our, Brooks' division, was strongly held. It was now daylight, and while a stronger assaulting column was being formed, the artillery swept the slope and kept the enemy's infantry and batteries under cover, while we engaged him on the left, assaulted and carried his strongly fortified position on the railroad, at nine A. M., just before the assaulting column was

ready to advance and carry those fortified heights from which were destroyed over 13,000 men of General Burnside's army only four months before. At 10 A. M., this bright Sunday morning of May 3rd., 1863, the dispositions being completed, the divisions of Generals Newton and Howe swept forward up the slope, carrying line after line of rifle pits with the bayonet, capturing many prisoners, the horses, and all but two guns of the Washington Artillery, with a dash and gallantry that excited the greatest admiration from us as we witnessed the glorious spectacle. By noon the entire heights were won, General Early's forces were divided, Barksdale falling back with Early on the telegraph road, and Hays with Wilcox's division on the plank road toward Chancellorsville. At the same time General Brooks commanding our division was rapidly moving his command to the plank road to take the advance, while McLaws was hastening along the same road from Chancellorsville to meet us, unite his command with Early's, Wilcox', and Barksdale's. Wilcox took a strong position on a ridge which ran at right angles to the plank road at Salem church, and also threw a force into the brick church and a neighboring schoolhouse. He was here joined by the other commands mentioned, and by leaving a strong force with the only two guns saved from the works on Marye's heights, falling back from ridge to ridge, shelling our advance, one shell killing an orderly of General Brooks, and wounding Capt. Theodore Read, his Adjutant General, as he was riding near me, delayed our advance so that his naturally strong position was well protected by rifle pits, thrown up before we were in position to attack. From our position on Deep run to Salem church the distance was about seven miles, and from the point where we reached the plank road, the church was about five miles distant, over all of which distance our advance was hotly contested, so that we could not have pushed rapidly forward and taken possession of the strong ridge and its sheltering timber at Salem church, before the enemy did,

as has been suggested, nor did we know of the existence of such a position.

At 5.30 P. M. our skirmishers pushed through the narrow belt of thick underbrush, in which grew some scattering trees, that was in front of, and concealed from us the abruptly rising bank upon which the enemy's intrenchments and strong line of troops, and the church and school house, now converted into citadels filled with armed men, were located, the force with which we had been contending strengthened as reported by 26,000 men and four batteries under General McLaws, awaited with confidence our assault.

Recalling our skirmishers, our brigade, Bartlett's, advanced through the almost impenetrable thicket, across deep ravines that impeded our progress and broke our alignment, exposed to a destructive fire of musketry and artillery, from which the tangled bushes did not protect us, but did prevent our returning, on we pressed, and as we came out on the opposite side of the thicket, the steep bank, the church, the school house, the enemy's line of rifle pits fringed with fire were before us. Up the slope we rushed, charged and carried the intrenchments, stormed the church and school house, and for a brief period held them. But Newton's division had not come up, no supports were at hand, when Wilcox reinforced by Semmes' brigade, led by General Semmes in person, and seconded by attacks on our flanks, made possible by our advanced position, gallantly advanced against us, we were compelled to abandon the ground we had carried, which was the key to the situation, and fall slowly back through the thicket and across an open field beyond, perhaps five hundred yards in all, the enemy's attempt to follow us, being repulsed by the obstinate resistance of our infantry, and the fire of Williston's, Rigsby's and Parson's Batteries.

General Bartlett states that his command numbered less than 1500, and in this assault, according to a memorandum made by me at the time, our brigade lost 649

officers and men. The official reports make it 37 less. The famous 121st. New York Volunteers, commanded by Colonel Emory Upton, to which I was transferred as Captain three weeks later at Colonel Upton's request, (on the expiration of the term of the 27th. N. Y. Vols., to which I belonged,) lost 276 in this battle. It is one of the immortal forty four regiments, that lost more men in battle than any others in the service.

As we were entering the timber on our advance I was riding in haste to the left of the brigade with orders from General Bartlett; General Brooks galloping in the opposite direction, met me at a ravine in which a number of men not belonging to our brigade were sheltering themselves from the storm of shot and shell to which we were exposed. Reining in his horse for an instant, the General pointed to them, and said to me, "Captain see those——cowards, see the——cowards, get them out of there, and put them in front." I saluted, said his order should be obeyed, and he galloped away. Quickly delivering the first order with which I was charged, I returned, ordered them up and forward, when they began to protest that they were pioneers, and that their business was to work and not to fight. I insisted in much more forcible language that as pioneers their place was in front, where General Brooks had ordered them, and that their proper working tools for the job in hand, were their muskets, carried my point, and put them where the General directed, then reported to General Bartlett. We made another effort to carry the enemy's position just before dark, but it was too strongly fortified, and held with the help of General McLaws' command and part of Anderson's, these reinforcements reported to be 26,000 strong, to enable us to gain another such foothold as our brigade had obtained in the first assault, and we were ordered to desist and rest on our arms till morning. Monday morning of May 4th dawned, and with it came the report that a column of 15,000 men from the direction of Richmond had the heights of Fredericksburg, cutting off the sixth

corps from communication with the town, and trying to interpose between us and Banks' ford. Taking advantage of General Hooker's inactivity from the time the main army under his command had been shut up behind the strong fortifications near United States ford at noon of Sunday May 3rd., General Lee left only the troops of the flanking column of Stonewall Jackson's late command, under General J. E. B. Stewart, to hold the six corps under Hooker within their fortifications, while he with the remainder of the Confederate army, came in person to join Early, Wilcox, and McLaws, to, as he says, drive Sedgwick across the Rappahannock, but as we heard it at the time, to capture, or drive us into the river. His first attempt was to cut us off from the ford and this was not only handsomely repulsed by General Howe's division, but that division captured 200 prisoners and a battle flag. The task of capturing or driving the Sixth Corps into the river was not so easy as it seemed from the distance of Chancellorsville, although Hooker sent Sedgwick word that precluded any hope of help. However, General Lee was resolved, so bringing up every man and gun that was available, and giving them time to rest, his final dispositions for the attack were at last complete, and at 5 P. M., the enemy's artillery opened on our lines.

Our brigade being on a ridge on the left of Captain McCartney's battery, (A First Massachusetts,) was fully exposed to this fire, from which we would have been sheltered by moving down the slope, a few paces to the rear. General Bartlett sent me to General Brooks to request his permission. As I rode off, a regiment on the right of the battery, not of our brigade, retired behind the hill, and the movement was seen by General Sedgwick. As I neared the piazza on which he was standing with Gen. Brooks, Sedgwick, without looking at my face, my uniform being covered by a poncho, took me for the commander of that regiment, said, "Colonel, why did you move your regiment without orders, sir?"

Before I could reply he recognized me and asked,

“What is it, Captain?” I replied, “General Bartlett sends his compliments, sir, and requests permission to retire his brigade a few yards, behind the shelter of the ridge.” He responded, “Give my compliments to General Bartlett, and say that his brigade must remain in position, and not move a foot now.” As I rode to the front, Generals Sedgwick and Brooks rode to the brigade after me, reaching our position by Captain McCartney’s battery just as General Lee in person, was directing his infantry to the attack on us. The 27th. N. Y. Vols., to which I belonged, the two years term for which it was mustered into the service of the United States, having only three weeks more to run, was on the skirmish line in front of our brigade and McCartney’s battery. The particular force to which our brigade was opposed at this time, 6 P. M., was Hoke’s and Wright’s brigades, and as they came within range our skirmishers and McCartney’s battery absolutely stopped their progress, and threw them into confusion.

The boys of the 27th. took advantage of every place of shelter on the skirmish line, from which to deliver an accurate and rapid fire, while the artillery smashed and scattered the advancing columns. At the enemy’s hesitation and confusion, our skirmishers cried out, “*come on Johnnie, do come over and see us.*” Falling back in the shelter of the timber, out of the range of our guns, the formation of the enemy was changed from column to line of battle; and again advanced to attack us, but our skirmishers redoubled their former efforts to repel the attack, repeated their derisive cries, yielded not one foot of ground, and as the artillerymen warmed to their work, McCartney formed his guns by battery, sent home the case shot, and as the contest warmed his blood, raised in his stirrups, shouted to his eager men, “*Aim, right section to the right oblique, left section to the left oblique, FIRE; and shell the whole——country.*” The men blackened by powder smoke, worked like demons, the guns belched forth a flood of fiery death, and the hill seemed to rock

under the terrific thunder of the battery; great gaps were opened in the enemy's lines, by the tornado of shot and shell, they retired into the friendly shelter of the woods, and night, darkness and silence, drew a curtain of mercy over the fearful scene.

Our friends, the enemy, pass lightly over such episodes as this, and General Early says in regard to this particular hour, "Hays advancing in the center from the foot of the hill, opposite the mill on Hazel Run; Hoke on the left, advancing across the hill on which Downman's house is situated and below it, driving the enemy before them. This movement was commenced very late, and Hays' and Hoke's brigades were thrown into some confusion by coming in contact after they crossed the Plank road below Guest's house, and it becoming difficult to distinguish our troops from those of the enemy, on account of the growing darkness, they had, therefore to fall back to reform, which was done on the plain below Guest's house."

He also says, in the next paragraph of his official report: "The loss in my division during all the time from the crossing was 136 killed, 838 wounded, and some 500 are reported missing, the greater part of whom are in all probability, stragglers. This does not include the loss in Barksdale's brigade and the artillery." As his division was at no time as much exposed as in this time of its advance against us, the "Contact" of Hoke's and Hays' brigades must have been very violent to have caused, as General Early says, that "They had to fall back to reform", and to account for a reasonable proportion of his loss. What they did come in contact with, was the shot and shell from McCartney's, Williston's, and DePeyster's guns. Thus Sedgwick had obeyed the injunction of Hooker, to "Look well to the safety of your corps."

The safety of the corps was now assured, and General Sedgwick, as soon as the darkness concealed his movements from the enemy, proceeded to carry out Hooker's further orders, "to recross, in preference, at Banks' Ford, where you can more readily communicate with the

main body." We fell back and took position on the heights, near Scotts', below Banks' Ford, the enemy occupying heights on the river bank, both above and below our position.

General Sedgwick says, "On Tuesday, the 5th., at 2 A. M., I received the order of the commanding general to withdraw from my position, cross the river, take up the bridge, and cover the ford. The order was immediately executed, the enemy meanwhile shelling the bridges from commanding positions above us on the river. When the last of the column was on the bridge, I received a dispatch from the commanding general countermanding the order to withdraw. My command was on the left bank, it could not recross before daylight, and must do it then, if at all, in face of the enemy, whose batteries completely commanded the bridges. I accordingly went into camp in the vicinity of the ford, sending an adequate force to guard the river and watch the ford.

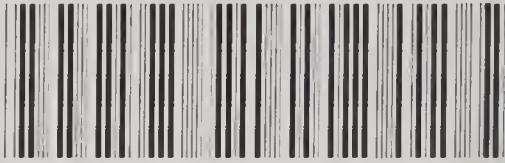
The losses of the Sixth Corps in these operations were 4,925 killed, wounded and missing. We captured from the enemy, according to the best information we could obtain, 5 battle-flags, 15 pieces of artillery—9 of which were brought off, the others falling into the hands of the enemy upon the subsequent reoccupation of Fredericksburg by his forces—and 1400 prisoners, including many officers of rank. No material of any kind belonging to the corps fell into the hands of the enemy except several wagons and a forge that were passing through Fredericksburg at the time of its reoccupation by his forces." On the 6th., we returned to our old camps.

General Bartlett says in his official report, "I have purposely reserved until the last all mention of the Sixteenth and Twenty-seventh New York regiments. The term of service of these regiments had nearly expired before the campaign had commenced; yet, true to the instincts of the soldier, both officers and men have elicited the warmest admiration for their gallant conduct throughout. The Twenty-seventh also has its glory roll. The Sixteenth

and Twenty-seventh Regiments retire from my command and from the service of the United States after two years active service having participated in the first battle of the Army of the Potomac, and in its last with honor. They deserve well of their country and will be received with honor by their friends. During the campaign, I received the most efficient aid from Captain H. Seymour Hall, assistant inspector-general, who was brave, energetic, and untiring in his endeavors to promote the efficiency of my command."

The future historian will be puzzled by the strange failure of General Hooker to make any detailed official report of the operations of the army under his command, during the Chancellorsville campaign and battles; but as none has been published in the official records, and as he had ample time to make such report during the nearly two months subsequent to Chancellorsville, that he was still in the command of the army, it is fair to assume that he made no such report, unless, like all other reports of his during his command of the Army of the Potomac, it was made direct to President Lincoln, and failed to reach the files in the office of the Adjutant General of the army.

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